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INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SARAJEVO 000239

SIPDIS

EUR/SCE (HYLAND, FOOKS); NSC FOR HELGERSON; OSD FOR BEIN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/27/2019
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [BK](#)
SUBJECT: CLAC APPROVES BRCKO AMENDMENT; ALL EYES ON
PARLIAMENT

REF: SARAJEVO 190

Classified By: DCM Judith Cefkin. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

CLAC Votes Yes

11. (C) The Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee (CLAC) in Bosnia's state-level House of Representatives (HoR) on February 26 approved the proposed amendment on Brcko District (Reftel). Eight of the nine CLAC members -- all but Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD) caucus chairman Drago Kalabic -- were present. (Note: Kalabic and three other CLAC members were attending a lunch with the German Ambassador at that time, and CLAC chairman Sefik Dzaferovic from the Party of Democratic Action (SDA) postponed the meeting for 30 minutes to wait for them, citing the importance of full participation in the Brcko vote. End Note.) The CLAC put the amendment to two votes, both of which needed a simple majority -- five delegates -- to pass. On the first vote, all eight members voted in favor of the constitutional basis for the amendment. On the second vote, six members voted in favor of the principles of the amendment. Ekrem Ajanovic of Party for BiH (SBiH) and Momcilo Novakovic of the Democratic Party (DS) voted against the second vote. The other SBiH CLAC delegate, Adem Huskic, voted in favor on both votes. As expected, the delegates from SDA, the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ)-BiH, HDZ-1990, and SNSD also voted in favor.

SBiH May Be Waffling

12. (C) The CLAC vote underscored uncertainty within SBiH on the amendment. Although this CLAC vote did not address the substance of the text, it was clear that the SBiH leadership expected its delegates to vote against it. An advisor to SBiH VP Safet Halilovic attended the CLAC session and, prior to the vote, urged his delegates not to support the amendment. Huskic retorted that he would vote as he pleased. Shortly thereafter, Ajanovic called Beriz Belkic -- SBiH official and HoR Speaker -- asking for guidance on how he should vote.

Next Steps

13. (C) The amendment is already on the HoR agenda for a first reading on March 4. It will require a simple majority to pass in the first reading (Reftel). The House of Peoples (HoP) plans to convene its CLAC on March 5, followed by a discussion of Brcko at the full HoP session later that day.

The two houses plan to jointly conduct the public debate from March 5 through 20. We will continue to engage parliamentarians over the next week to ensure that those who have already pledged to support the amendment will in fact do so. We also will engage SBiH delegates in hopes of exploiting the rifts that may be emerging within the party over the amendment, although we are not counting on their support.

ENGLISH